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ABSTRACT

The question of who should provide day care services is an unresolved issue in the current day care debate and a topic now on the national agenda because it is the common concern of a constellation of diverse, highly motivated interest groups. Motivation for extending day care in the United States stems from several factors: among these are the changing American family and labor force, the demand for equal educational opportunity, the "workfare" movement (advocating provision of day care services so that mothers can get off the welfare roles), and, generally, awareness of the importance of early childhood experience for later performance. As a result of widespread public interest, it is probable that a national program of day care for preschool children will be developed in the foreseeable future. However, before policy can be established, major issues of day care must be discussed. Specifically, the issues of eligibility, program approach, costs, personnel, and delivery agencies must be considered. Possible spillover effects of the expansion of day care on other areas of society can be envisioned and should be taken account of in the policy debate. Given the diversity of goals and the variety of interests at work in this controversy over day care provision, the case can be made that no one national system of day care should be instituted at this time. (RH)

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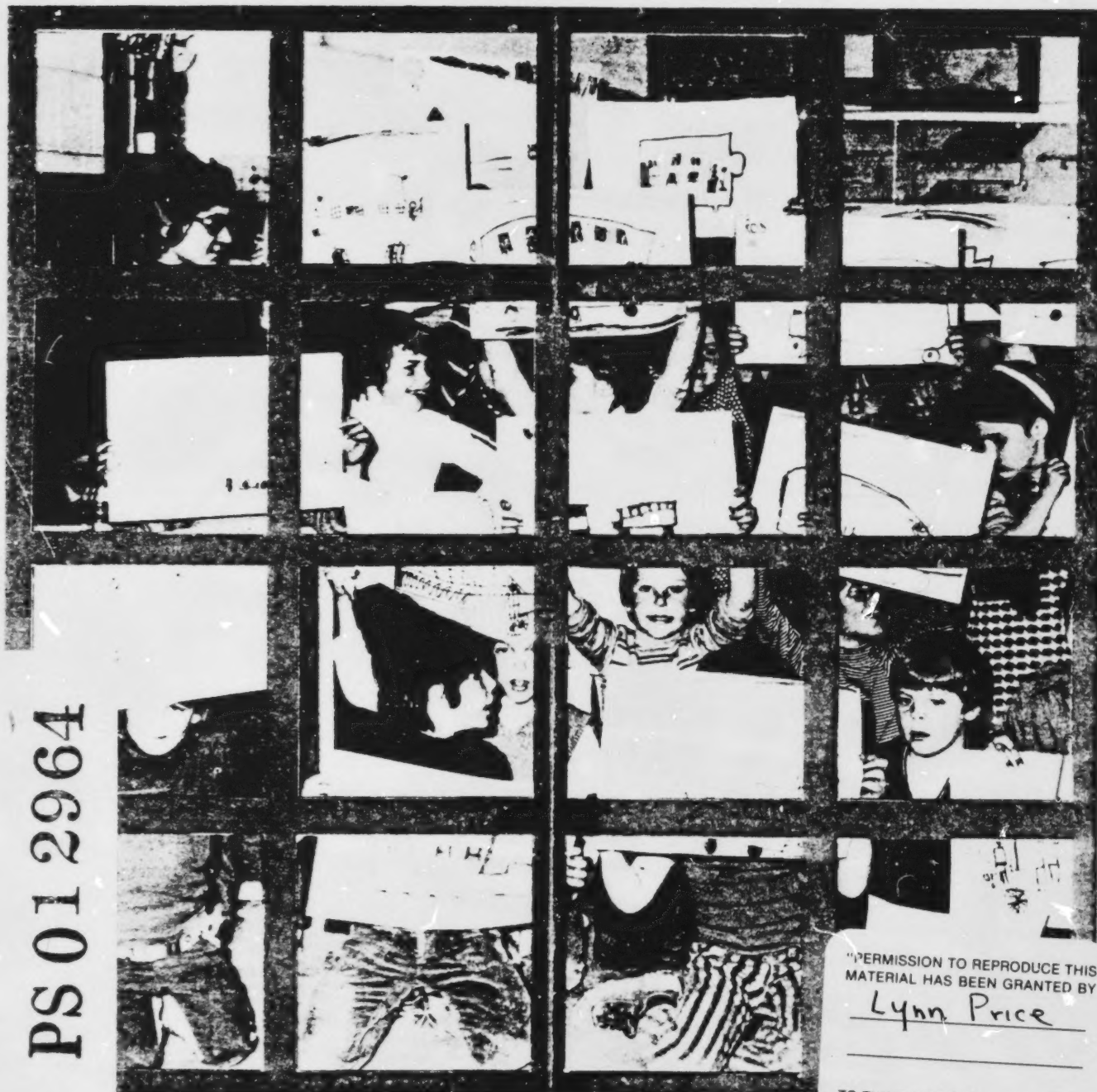
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DELIVERY ISSUES IN THE DAY CARE DEBATE

BY:

Maureen McGee



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DELIVERY ISSUES IN THE DAY CARE DEBATE

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Division of Research, Planning & Evaluation

Dear Colleague:

In mid-1976, as the final pieces of legislation implementing Chapter 212 were being put into place, the Department of Education began to turn attention to some needs and problems which had been held in abeyance for awhile. It was time to look ahead and study other educational needs of the people of New Jersey. Several under-served groups were identified. Young children and their parents formed one of those groups. More recently, in fiscal year 1978, the State Board of Education designated early childhood as one of nine areas to receive priority in planning.

A planning component, the Early Childhood Planning Project was developed within the Division of Research, Planning, and Evaluation in response to our planning needs. The project encompasses several major kinds of activities. One of these is background research into early childhood issues and analysis of options for policy decisions. In this process, the project has produced several papers which we believe to be of interest to a wide audience.

The present paper is one of these. In Delivery Issues in the Day Care Debate, questions of appropriate initiatives and responsibility are examined. Other papers provide a demographic description of young children in New Jersey; a consideration of rationales for determining the age of entry into schooling; and a summary of results of early educational intervention programs. I believe that you will find these occasional papers to be informative and thought-provoking. I invite your comment on them and solicit your suggestions for our on-going series of "Occasional Papers in Education."

Cordially,

Gary Gappert
Gary Gappert
Assistant Commissioner

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Introduction

INITIATIVE AND RESPONSIBILITY IN CHILD
CARE SERVICES

BY

TYNETTE W. HILLS

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A debate of significant proportions has been taking place for some years in our country on the subject of day care. Like an intermittently watched pot, it simmers on the back burner, occasionally bubbling over and requiring dramatic and quick attention. An example of such a time of "bubbling over" was the 1975-6 dialogue, an occasional diatribe, concerning the Mondale-Brademas Child and Family Services Act. For some, the question then was: day care, to be or not to be? For others, the question was: day care is; who is responsible?

The rapid growth of extra-familial care for young children is well documented. The sharp rise in the numbers of mothers working outside the home, as single or shared breadwinners, is perhaps even better known.¹ Simultaneously, the number of adults in the home has declined. These circumstances have produced a clear need for additional day care services. The modified roles of women in our society are also contributing factors, however the status of women's liberation as a cause yields to its status

¹See Paper No. 1 of this series, New Jersey Families with Young Children: Demographic Status and Trends, by Maureen McGee, New Jersey Department of Education Occasional Paper, 1978.

as a consequence of a complex technological society. In truth, as Maureen McGee points out in this Occasional Paper, the various and continuing changes in the functions of the family and the responsibilities of its members result from adaptation to the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent Technological Age.

Traditions and myths die hard. The close family unit, particularly the "ideal" nuclear family, consisting of two parents and their children, has been the premise of our thinking about families for many years. This, we seemed to believe, was the way to rear children. That children should be in long-term care of persons not tied to them by blood or moral commitment and that this care should take place outside their homes has brought anxiety to many. How would those children fare emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually?

Earnest efforts of social scientists have been directed to answering those questions. The cautious consensus seems to be that, given adequate quality controls, children will not be harmed. Whether positive benefits might accrue to children is another matter. Moreover, the quality of child care services is difficult to measure, and different children may be affected variously by what seems to be the same kind of care. Still, we can be sufficiently reassured that, when out-of-home child care is required by a family, it is possible to provide it at a level of quality that will not be detrimental to the child.²

² Urie Bronfenbrenner. Research on the Effects of Day Care. Mimeo. Cornell University, Syracuse, New York, 1975 Jerome Kagan. The Effects of Infant Day Care on Psychological Development. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University, 1976.

The fourth paper in this series will provide reviews of research into the effects of early education and day care. See Tynette Hills, Results of Early Education: Efficiency and Effectiveness.

Thus, we are freed to examine the questions of how day care should be provided, and by whom. There are related questions. Should day care be provided for all children or for some children, and, if the latter, which children? As with all social services, we will make this decision on pragmatic and philosophic bases, involving our views of economic resources and distribution. For example, publicly-funded day care for economically disadvantaged children can be seen as an effort to reduce inequality and to overcome any inherent differences between persons based on socio-economic status. In its most elementary state, it is a form of income redistribution. Publicly-funded day care available to all children, on the other hand, would aim at providing all interested citizens with a potentially desirable social service. The purpose of the second approach is to assure provision through the public sector for more and more human needs. Indeed, the rise of the public school system and its gradual expansion is a form of this approach, viewed historically.

The alternative we choose for any expansion of day care services will identify our target population and may, or may not, suggest the most appropriate sponsors and delivery systems. The question of responsibility for delivering day care is an open one.

In recent years, some educators and professional organizations have

³
Amitai Etzioni: Toward a Swedenized America. Saturday Review, December 11, 1976, pp. 46-47, 53, 58.

⁴
The third paper in this series will offer a summary of the historical rise of the public school system in two advanced technological countries. See Maureen McGee, Age of Entry into Public Schooling in the United States and Great Britain. New Jersey Department of Education Occasional Paper, 1978.

pointed to the public schools as a natural delivery system.⁵ There is an existing system in place. Moreover, as a result of declining birth rates, there is available space purchased with tax funds, and there is a growing body of unemployed teachers. Others are adamantly opposed to such a solution, their argument being that day care is a unique social service for which the public schools have demonstrated neither the proper sensitivity nor readiness to change as needed.⁶ For them, what is necessary is the development of locally responsive systems of child care delivery. Still others point to the unrealistic expectations represented in either approach. Child care service needs are great and varied. A variety of solutions and a sharing of resources are best at this point in time.⁷

In this Occasional Paper, McGee examines the important issues in the day care debate. They are numerous and varied, like the groups directly affected by the ultimate decisions. She points to one question which may be overlooked in the intense discussion: which groups not joining in the debate may also be affected ultimately by decisions we make? We should begin to

⁵The AFT Task Force on Educational Issues. Putting Early Childhood and Day Care Services into the Public Schools. American Federation of Teachers, Washington, D.C., 1976. See also R. Salzer. Day Care and the Schools. Urban Education, Vol. X, 1, April 1975, pp. 3-4.

⁶For overviews of some of these arguments, see Greta G. Fein and Alison Clarke-Stewart. Day Care in Context. John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1973. (See especially Chapters 2 and 21.)

⁷A model debate on the foregoing issues was carried out in a symposium entitled. Should the Public Schools Control Child Care Services?, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Annual Conference of 1975, Dallas, Texas. In final commentary, Bettye Caldwell took the view that the wrong questions are being asked. The question is not who should control day care, but rather, what sponsors can do it best? She recommended a variety of sponsors who could do the job well, be responsive to citizens, and place citizens in decisionmaking roles.

identify these groups now. One of them could well be the children, who have no voice and no vote.

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DELIVERY ISSUES IN THE DAY CARE DEBATE

by

Maureen McGee

Modern economic history has been characterized by a continuous shift of activities from the extended family to extra-familial organizations. These might be private firms, government agencies, or non-profit institutions. They all specialize in providing services that replace household activities.¹ The current demand for child care facilities outside the home can be seen as an extension of this trend. This is the way in which Medicare evolved: it grew out of a widespread belief that the financial and emotional costs of the traditional system of family responsibility for the elderly sick had become intolerable. In the same way, the "child care cause" gains strength as the opinion spreads that the social and economic costs of the traditional system of "keeping mother at home with the children" are unnecessarily high.²

Within the context of this long-range movement, day care is now at a turning point in defining exactly what it is and whom it should serve. The central issue is the degree to which day care should become a normal part of American life, the degree to which it should evolve from the status of a "necessary evil" to become a legitimate child care option for middle income as well as lower income families.

¹ Gad Shifron, "The Case for Public Subsidization of Child Care Services" Institute for Research on Poverty Discussion Papers, University of Wisconsin, 1974, p.1.

² Gilbert Y. Steiner, "Child Care: New Social Policy Battleground" The Brookings Bulletin, Volume 9, number 1, Winter 1972, p. 6.

The current focus of this debate is the proposed extension of the publicly financed school system to include children younger than those the system has traditionally served. This question of delivery--how services get to the people who need them--is too often dismissed as a routine technical decision. In the case of an institution like day care that deals with young children, the means, in a very real sense, are the ends of the program. The issue of delivery assumes critical importance. Thus, the final question of "what kind of day care should we have" cannot be answered without first raising the corollary question of "who should provide the day care services." Developing a framework within which this delivery question can be addressed is the point of this paper.

Background of the Day Care Debate

Two aspects of the development of day care in the United States are especially relevant to the current policy debate.

Historically, day care has been much closer to the field of social welfare than to education. Its very definition stems from the field of welfare: "The care and protection of children from families with some type of social pathology."¹ It is one matter to "rescue" children from inappropriate family situations or to provide child care so that poor mothers are free to work. It is an entirely different matter to offer comprehensive, developmental child care to all children regardless of their family income

¹ Bettye Caldwell, "Day Care: A Timid Giant Grows Bolder": National Elementary Principal, Vol LI, No. 1, September 1971, p. 75.

or social situation. Structuring the latter system on the conceptual framework derived from the former is a difficult and confusing operation at best.

Just as this definitional or institutional record colors the present controversy, so too does a shifting in the policy goals to which day care programs are directed.

Traditionally, the policy has been for the federal government to sponsor programs for children in response to some urgent national concern, (during the depression, WPA Nurseries provided jobs for unemployed nursery school teachers, and during World War II, day care freed women to work in the wartime economy).² It has also been federal policy to sponsor children's programs as a way of addressing some national problem considered the responsibility of the national government (Head Start was set up in the Sixties as a means of addressing a national problem of poverty). The efforts in each case were means to some other ends, not ends in themselves. The implications of this are two-fold. Insofar as day care developed as a derivative sort of movement, it still finds internal difficulty in establishing its own identity as a field, and external difficulty in proving its own legitimacy as a social institution in its own right.³

²In August 1942 the War Manpower Commission directed the Office of Defense, Health and Welfare to set up a program of federally supported child care centers for children of mothers working in war-related industries. By 1945, 1.6 million children were enrolled in nurseries and day care centers receiving federal funds.

³Barbara Schwimmer, "Day Care as an Instrument of Political and Social Control" delivered at 51st Annual Meeting of American Orthopsychiatric Association, San Francisco, 1974.

Reasons for the Current Level of Attention

This piecemeal background notwithstanding, day care is now on the national agenda because it is in the common interest of a constellation of groups, from welfare reformers to early childhood educators to working mothers. This shared and intensifying concern reflects the importance of the five factors set forth below as the principal forces motivating the push for expanded day care in this country.

1. The first motivating force is the changing nature of the American family. While the proportion of all families headed by married men has been declining, the proportion headed by women has been rising. (One out of eight families was headed by a woman in 1974, compared with one out of ten a decade earlier.) Moreover, in 35% (2.4 million) of all the families headed by women, the female family head was the only person in the family group who was employed.⁴

II. The second factor is the changing nature of the labor force. The labor force participation rates of women have increased from 32.7% in 1948 to 45.6% in 1974.⁵ For married women, the participation rates have gone from 22.0% in 1948 to 43.0% in 1974. Between 1940 and 1974, the rates for mothers quintupled, reflecting probably the most significant labor force change the country experienced during this period. Of the mothers with children under 6 years of age, only 10.8% were working in 1948, while

⁴1975 Handbook on Women Workers. Bulletin 297, U.S. Department of Labor, Employment Standards Administration, Women's Bureau.

⁵Labor force participation rates measure the percentage of the civilian non-institutionalized population in the civilian labor force. These are the most recent figures available. 1975 Handbook on Women Workers, ibid. See Appendix.

34.4% were working in 1974.⁶

	All Women	Mothers
1940	28%	9%
1974	45%	46%

From the child's perspective, the picture is just as striking. In 1973, 31.1% of all children under the age of six had mothers who were working or looking for work.⁷ Although the capacity of licensed or approved day care centers and family day care homes expanded from 475,200 in 1967 to 1,021,202 in 1972, that number is still only one-fifth of the number of children under six with mothers in the working force.

These first two factors combine to provoke a massive increase in the demand for child care services and give rise to an extended debate over the way children will develop if they grow up outside their home environments.⁸

III. A third factor motivating the push for early childhood education and day care is the demand for "equal educational opportunity" on the part of minority groups. If later school achievement, or lack of it, appears to be related to minority status in income, race, ethnicity, or language, early educational intervention is be viewed as a preventive effort. Some proponents of publicly funded day care see it in this perspective.

⁶ The sharpest increase during the forties and fifties was among mothers of school-age children. This pattern has reversed itself since the early 1960's, with the sharpest increase among young mothers of preschool-age children.

⁷ Child Care Data and Materials. Committee on Finance, U.S. Senate. Russell B. Long, Chairman, October 1974, p. 36.

⁸ For discussion of such issues, see the Congressional Record of May 1972. The entire issue is devoted to this debate.

Research has suggested that children who lack a secure and stimulating home environment may experience difficulties in everything from learning to read to formulating constructive personal goals when they grow up.⁹ Although the methodological rigor of some of this research is questionable, the general thrust of the findings is clear. It prompts many people to call for government efforts to provide a "head start"--a compensation before the fact--for children presumed to be at disadvantage in later schooling and in later life.

IV. The fourth factor underlying the concern over day care arrangements is the "workfare" movement and the controversy it engenders. To call for day care so that mothers can get off the welfare rolls and into paying jobs is to call for subsidized child care arrangements for children of newly-employed mothers. But there are problems with this model and the enthusiasm with which it is proposed, as Sidney Levenstein points out:

Because day care is considered by so many groups to be the desirable solution to a variety of problems, there is a danger that some people will be subjected to not-so-subtle pressure to accept day care for their children when they would rather care for them at home.

To withstand such pressures requires not only strong convictions, but money and influence. Low income families, pressured by the work ethic to accept the idea that mothers of preschoolers should work, and public assistance recipients, pressured by their inadequate grants to get off welfare, lack precisely these assets.¹⁰

⁹See Early Education Current Theory, Research and Action, edited by Robert D. Hess and Roberta Meyer Bear for a summary of this research, (Aldine Publishing Co., Chicago, 1968).

¹⁰Sidney Levenstein, "Day Care: Gold Coin or Brass Check," Social Work, September 1972, p. 38.

Although provisions against this kind of pressure will probably be included in any child care legislation, the pressure to create a larger labor pool of low-income workers and substitute "workfare" for welfare could easily subvert these safeguards and deprive many low-income people of any meaningful choice.

V. The fifth factor involved in the day care debate touches upon the other three and, in a sense, underlines their significance. Research evidence points out the importance of the preschool years to the cognitive and emotional development of all children, not just the "culturally deprived." To the extent that this is true, and publicly accepted, all society shares a heightened interest in how its young children are treated. This interest provokes public debate over the forms of child care arrangements that are in the best interest of the child and society at large. The key point here is the growing awareness of the link between the early years and later performance. Day care is increasingly needed by working mothers, demanded by minority spokesmen, and promoted by welfare reformers. It is also perceived as an important social issue by wider constituencies than those directly affected.

In this sense, what the argument over public school prime sponsorship addresses at one level is "nothing less than a fundamental shift in the relative roles and political influence of the two major socializing institutions of the society; the family and the schools."¹¹ Consequently, day care represents a potentially tremendous force for political, social and economic influence. Depending on how day care is financed and organized,

¹¹Jerome Bruner in Ronald K. Parker, ed., The Preschool in Action: Exploring Early Childhood Programs. (Boston: Allyn & Bacon, Inc., 1972), p. 8.

it could be a "bonanza, boondoggle or bust for a wide variety of individuals and institutions."¹²

Groups and Institutions Affected

These ideological and practical concerns coalesce in such a way that fear of the "wrong" people getting control of day care is one of the key concerns of the six organized groups most involved in the debate. The American Federation of Teachers, proprietary day care operators, community day care groups, early childhood education professionals, the public school systems, and the Women's Movement all take strong positions on the question of day care delivery.

I. Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, strongly supports legislation specifying public schools as the presumed prime sponsors of day care. He just as strongly opposes any system such as that proposed in the Child and Family Services Act debated during 1975-6. In that unsuccessful piece of legislation, the money (1.8 billion over a three-year period) would be allocated to prime sponsors--localities or combinations of localities that, in cooperation with local child and family services councils, would develop annual plans for meeting the needs of their geographic areas.¹³

¹² Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, Who's Minding the Children? The History and Politics of Day Care in America. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973), p. 202.

¹³ "Prime Sponsors" are charged with planning of services, receiving and distributing funds, and putting final approval on allocation of funds to contractual organizations.

The reasoning behind the Shanker position is straightforward. Declining enrollments and tight budgets mean teacher layoffs. Expanded day care and preschool programs, federally funded but controlled by the public school establishment, mean jobs for teachers and continued higher membership roles for their unions.¹⁴

II. Proprietary day care operators oppose publicly funded day care as a threat to their very existence. They call for equal footing with non-profit operators in any program that might finally emerge from the debates over the Mondale-Brademas Bill.

The sources of their concern are twofold. If free preschool services are universally available, tuition-paying pupils will become rare or non-existent. Currently, some of the places in their facilities are filled by contract with social welfare agencies purchasing day-time care of children in several categories of risk or need.

Moreover, a number of these represent a specialized philosophy, e.g., Montessori, "free" schools, etc. They believe that public school prime sponsorship of child development and care services would inevitably weaken and ultimately restrict alternative approaches to preschool education.

III. Community-based child care groups support any system that ensures local control and fear that public school prime sponsorship would undermine parental involvement and program flexibility. They share with the proprietary day care group a vested interest in the status quo. Enjoying their current degree of control over programming and influence of local policy making processes, they oppose any system that would attempt to regularize day care across the country.

¹⁴John Matthews, "Day Care: What Role for Public Schools?," Compact, Volume IX, No. 3, June 1975, p. 19.

IV. The loosely defined grouping we termed "Early Childhood Professionals" includes teachers, researchers, and academics involved in the education and development of the young child. Their concerns are threefold. First, a belief in the value of developmental care--as contrasted with custodial--combines with an emphasis on the importance of "the whole child."¹⁵ They cite contemporary critics, who find the public schools deficient in comprehensive views of child development and learning. Second, professional pride is injured by the presumption that those trained as elementary and secondary school teachers can shift into working with preschoolers without benefit of specialized early childhood training. Third, "There is a crisis of confidence in the public schools; the magnitude of this crisis is such that poor and minority families are unlikely to trust them to handle early childhood programs. Because of entrenched bureaucracies, lock-step curricula, and involvement in personnel issues, it is especially true that urban schools are not qualified for this role."¹⁶

V. The public schools' argument for their sponsorship might be put as Commissioner Bell did: "If asked why I propose the elementary school as the child development center for a neighborhood, I might reply "because it's there." The elementary school is the institution closest to the home... it is an organic part of the neighborhood where a child lives."¹⁷

¹⁵This concept emphasizes both the uniqueness of each child and the fact that physical, mental, emotional and social development cannot be separated. Its history goes back at least to the 1930 White House Conference on Children.

¹⁶Barbara Bowman, speech at Conference of the National Association for the Education of Young Children, November 1975, quoted in Tynette Hills, "Report on National Association for the Education of Young Children Conference," p. 22.

¹⁷T.H. Bell, U.S. Commissioner of Education. "The Family, The Young Child, and The School," July 12, 1974.

Efficiency, economy, and non-duplication of services are the core of their rationale. Their motivation parallels that of Mr. Shanker.

VI. The final organized group with an interest in the delivery of day care services is the Women's Movement. Free 24-hour community-controlled day care has long been one of the key issues of the women's movement. Insofar as their goal is "quality child care facilities funded by the government and entirely controlled by the community," public school prime sponsorship would most likely prove unacceptable in any formulation.¹⁸

Goals and Objectives of Day Care

The goals of any delivery system are the goals of the program it operates. So the goals of a delivery system for day care must be to carry out--conscientiously and efficiently--the goals of the national day care effort.

But the most basic point to be made about the general goals of publicly sponsored day care in this country is that there are none. Specific goals advanced by special groups abound. The public debate is littered with uncertain objectives and accusations, from both supporters and opponents of child care outside that offered by the family.¹⁹

This proposition--that the movement lacks coherent overall goals--is more than cranky academic criticism of a popular issue. The lack of consistent goals contributes to the confusion about child care. More importantly, it is the result of some very basic characteristics of our society as it is presently constituted. The heterogeneous nature of our citizenry demands heterogeneous child-rearing practices.

¹⁸Vicki Breitbart, The Day Care Book (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1974), p. 101

¹⁹Again, the Congressional Record of May 1972 contains a plethora of misquotes in the service of the opponents of day care.

No consensus exists on the "ideal child." Some would argue for individualistic, aggressive, self-assertive children. Others hope for community-minded souls who are more restrained and aware of their place in the world. Newly raised in the past few years, but less settled than ever, is the controversy over the relative merits to our society of the traditional "melting pot" approach and the contemporary emphasis on ethnic uniqueness and pride.

If we do not agree on what kind of children we want, how can we agree on what kind of day care we want? This absence of commonly accepted childrearing values sharply differentiates the U.S. from other societies which have attempted wide-scale publicly-funded day care. In one sense, the primary feature of the Russian, Cuban, and Israeli child care systems is that they are only one part of a larger, radical, conscious, and planned design for social change within the entire society. The United States has no such plan and is unlikely to formulate one in the near future.

Therefore, on the theory that "child-care" has such a multitude of meanings in this country, and on the theory that day care still claims little if any legitimacy as an institution, the best way to lay out the goals of day care is to define them in terms of their proposed connection with the general movement of society. There are basically three ways to do this. Day care can be a way to patch up society's as yet unfulfilled promise, or it can be a stratagem aimed at a fundamental restructuring of society.

I. The patchwork view has been the dominant rationale for day care since the first day nurseries were established a century ago. From this viewpoint, day care helps to compensate for faults in the family structure,

educational resources, or the economic system. It works as a kind of first aid--for fatherless families, for children needing better care or extra educational assistance, and for mothers precluded from full time child care by economic or emotional difficulties.²⁰

The current patchwork view differs from earlier versions, which asserted that the ideal child care was always that provided by the mother in the home. The new version springs, partially, from a great suspicion that the "lower class" family is a defective socializing agent for children. Such was the position of former president Nixon--day care was an unfortunate but necessary deviation from the American norm, a minimal effort associated with the poor and public welfare.²¹ Essentially, the goals of day care are here defined by the status quo in "mainstream" society and designed to bring those who are disadvantaged in one way or another up to this standard.²²

II. The second approach to day care, as a way to realize society's aims, also accepts the values and directions of the present society but acknowledges that they are as yet far from realized. By assuming some of the duties of the home, day care would permit entry into post-industrial society for vast numbers of previously excluded women. Day care would offer to all children an early educational environment employing the best

²⁰ A Children's Bureau publication reflects this interpretation: "The child who needs day care has a family problem which makes it impossible for his parents to fulfill their parental responsibility without supplementary help." Guides to State Welfare Agencies for the Development of Day Care Services, Children's Bureau, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, 1963.

²¹ See his Veto of the Child and Family Services Act of 1971.

²² Steinfels, op. cit. chapters 1 and 2.

resources that society has developed, thus equipping the greatest possible number of them for successful entry into a rapidly changing, highly complex society. This is a good general statement of the goals shared by all of the groups cited in the last section with the exception of the feminists and perhaps the more radical of community groups. Where they diverge, with a good deal of gusto, is on the question of how best to meet such goals.

III. The third, utopian, viewpoint looks at day care as a means to renew and restructure society in a way radically discontinuous with the present. Day care would neither maintain the status quo nor extend the logic of society to its full realization, but would attempt to block the present direction of society and start it off in a new one. This formulation might best represent the interests of some of the more radical feminist and community activists involved in the controversy over day care.²³

Alternative Policies

Whether or not any of day care's goals are endorsed by the major parties concerned, or even coherently presented in their arguments, it is quite probable that a national program of day care for preschool children will be developed in the foreseeable future.

Any national program tends to evoke intense reactions, both positive and negative, especially when it is instituted quickly and unevenly. The enthusiasm and criticism engendered by the Head Start program illustrates

²³Steinfels, *op. cit.*, gives a good summary background of each of these positions in her first two chapters; this analysis is indebted to that source.

what can happen when there are large gaps between the conception and implementation of a new idea. Consequently, it is important to debate the major issues in day care before the policies are set. Five such issues stand out. Although closely interconnected, the issues can be separated for analytical purposes and then rejoined to form a conceptual matrix in which the delivery question can best be framed.

I. The first issue is eligibility. Day care cannot be provided for the 22 million children under six years of age in the immediate future. Thus the decision must be made; which segment of the population will receive the service through government funds. The criteria can be family income, the child's age, the child's or parents' need regardless of income, or any combination of these. The eligibility criteria selected will affect the speed with which programs are implemented, the quality and type of programs, and the choice of personnel and training programs.²⁴

Family income is the criterion that generates the most controversy. The case for publicly subsidized developmental day care for poor children enjoys widespread support. The argument rests on the advantages to taxpayers from helping welfare recipients get off welfare, and the benefits accruing to the children.²⁵ The alternative case--for publicly funded day care for children of middle income families--is in much more dispute. It has been well summarized by former Representative Ogden Reid (R. N.Y.):

- 1) Quality day care is in itself an invaluable addition to the educational process,
- 2) educational advantages are increased if the groups of children

²⁴Levenstein, op. cit., p.37

²⁵Joseph Stocker, Early Childhood Education: Current Trends in School Policies and Programs (Arlington, Virginia: National School Public Relations Association, 1973), p. 57.

are mixed economically and racially, 3) middle class children can profit from quality day care as well as deprived children, and 4) middle class mothers who want careers or to supplement their family incomes should not be penalized because they are too well-off to qualify for existing welfare-type help and too poor to afford commercial day care centers.²⁶ Albert Shanker supports this position and calls for federally sponsored day care and early childhood education on a free and universal basis. His opposition to limiting services to the poor or making non-poor pay fees is based on the argument that programs limited to the poor fail to generate widespread support, can rarely be expanded or properly funded, and are all too often inferior.²⁷

The argument against broad eligibility was sketched in the discussion of the "patchwork" goals some have set for day care.

II. The second issue is program approach. There is wide, though not universal, agreement that the provision of custodial care alone should be avoided and that the developmental approach to children's needs is desirable. It is unlikely that the nation will opt for either the worst custodial care or the best developmental care. But the decision must be made as to where on the continuum policy will be directed. Day care programs can be established more quickly and inexpensively if policy decisions favor the custodial approach.

As Levenstein observes, "Of course no program will be called custodial, but whether it actually is will depend on the quality of personnel entrusted with the care of the nations' most precious natural resource, its children."²⁸

²⁶Quoted in Stocker, *ibid.*, p. 58

²⁷Mathews, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

²⁸Levenstein, p. 38.

The trade-offs involve more than theoretical bargaining between advocates of different approaches. The more custodial the care, the lower the cost and the less skilled the personnel need be. The more academic the program, the more reason some observers find for day care to be under the auspices of the public schools. The more the focus is on the developmental view of the "whole child," the more relevant and important become the positions of early childhood professionals. Also, the more substantive the program becomes, the greater the apprehension about the kind of socialization that will be taking place under which group's control. If day care were little more than organized play care, there would be fewer fears of the "breakdown of the American family" expressed by opponents of the movement.²⁹

III. These considerations raise the third issue--costs. Any developmental program is bound to cost considerably more than one which is custodial. Estimates of the cost for day care range from \$1,000 to \$2,300 per child, depending on the part of the country being served and the quality of service provided.³⁰ This brings us to the essential economic facts of day care. "Few working women earn enough to pay the full cost of good day care. So for most children, day care must be provided by public funding."³¹ Quick calculations of the costs nationwide support the argument that "without federal support there will never be extensive day care and without federal

²⁹Raymond S. Moore, "Let's Keep the Little Kids Home", Compact, November-December 1973, pp. 22-23. A good summary of the opposition argument raised most articulately by Moore.

³⁰Robert R. Spillane, "Day Care: A Public School Administrator's View," Childhood Education, November 1972, p. 69.

³¹Ibid.

money whatever day care there is will never be very good."³² Levenstein provides an approximation of potential costs:

Assuming that there are four million children under 6 in low income families and that half of these children are 3 to 5 years old and the other half are under 3, it is possible to estimate the cost of providing full-day center care for the older children and full-day family or foster day care for the younger children. The Day Care and Child Development Council of America estimates that it would cost \$1,862 per year per child in 'acceptable' center care and \$2,032 per year per child in foster day care. Thus, the cost of acceptable day care would be \$3.72 billion for the older children and \$4.06 billion for the younger children. If one uses the somewhat higher estimates of \$2,320 and \$2,372 for "desirable" center and foster day care, the figures are \$4.64 billion and \$4.74 billion, respectively.³³

There is a clear economic argument for public subsidization of early childhood education--positive externalities. Educational research indicates that the early years are crucial in personality formation. Once children are born, it is to the interest of society that they become respectable members of that society regardless of the ability of their parents to pay for food, shelter, health care or education. If much antisocial behavior stems from early failure and can be avoided through good preschool programs, then society at large, not just the children, will benefit when children have a good preschool experience.³⁴ However, the "if" part of that sentence is far from accepted wisdom at this point.

³²Steinfels, op. cit., p. 204.

³³Levenstein, op. cit., p. 40.

³⁴Shifron, op. cit., p. 3.

The argument against federal support is essentially two-fold. It is based on the high opportunity costs of allocating such a level of funding to a program surrounded by such controversy and lack of agreement over its worth. It also reflects widespread fears that "government intervention on behalf of children can only lead to large bureaucracies, an intolerable burden for the middle-class tax payers, and government control over the rearing of children."³⁵

IV. The fourth issue is personnel. One of the greatest obstacles to rapid implementation of a national day care program is the lack of personnel. There are too few nursery school and kindergarten teachers or trained day care and child development professionals. Because a commitment to quality day care would have implications for both manpower policies and training facilities, the quality of personnel would be an important factor in evaluating proposals and programs.

The personnel options are three: certified early childhood educators, recycled primary or secondary teachers, or those with competency-based certification. Of the first, there are not nearly enough. To the second the day care community and early childhood specialists raise strong objections. There is widespread agreement, even among teacher's organizations, that the training of elementary and secondary teachers does not necessarily qualify them to work with very young children. According to some child development advocates, the certification system supported by the organized teaching profession is too rigid and does not adequately

³⁵Early Childhood Project Newsletter, Education Commission of the States. March 1976, p. 5.

recognize competence.³⁶ One example of the competency-based option is the federally-funded "Child Development Associate" program. This certification for skills acquired on-the-job is potentially the most economical and efficient approach to meeting personnel needs, but Albert Shanker's teachers' union strongly opposes any competency-based system of certification. The president of the powerful teacher's union regards talk of performance-based criteria for day care and preschool teachers as an attack on current standards for public school teaching that protect current members of the profession. The intent is perceived to be "establishment of an alternative school system which will really show how bad the public schools really are. To show that teachers don't really need college degrees. To show how good a system you can run without tenure. And without union contracts."³⁷

V. The conflicting values raised by these four issues crystallize around the fifth, which poses the question of who is to provide the services under a national program of day care. There is general agreement that a delivery agency, because of its particular political history, operating procedures, and assumptions, determines the kind, quality, and availability of public services. In child development, the debate is centered on the role of the school system.

Use of public school systems to administer widespread prekindergarten programs is advocated for various reasons. The schools are the only existing public delivery system already dealing with the logistical problems of such a large population. The school system has a broad local and state fiscal base, buildings, the capacity for financing new construction

³⁶Sally V. Allen, "The Schools Can/Can't Be Trusted With Child Development" Compact, February 1975, p. 23.

³⁷Mathews, p. 20.

or remodeling, and the capacity to set standards, regulate and retrain personnel. With a surplus of teachers open to retraining and with student enrollment declining, public school space and staff are expected to be available in the near future.

Another view is that the merits of a uniform system do not outweigh the benefits of a localized, diversified approach. Still another argues that each state and community should have the option to choose the administrative vehicle best able to do the job at the local level, where the programs are actually delivered. Because early childhood programs are essentially different from those now operated by public school systems, automatic control should not be assigned to the schools. The latter might be selected in many instances, but critics maintain that they often have not achieved real parent participation, have not demonstrated an ability to develop programmatic continuity and have not been concerned with developmental issues in addition to the formal teaching system.³⁸

The argument essentially revolves around differing interpretations of the meaning of early childhood education, the current performance of the school systems, and their capacity to adapt to a very sensitive mandate like the care and education of preschool-aged children. Is early childhood education nothing more than the extension downwards of the existing system of education? If so, the schools are the logical agency to deliver such services. But if the goal of early childhood programs is something quite different from that of traditional schooling--indeed, some might say almost the opposite--automatically placing the programs in the schools may subvert the whole impulse behind child development

³⁸ Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

programs.

There is an historical framework for all this. For any attempt to extend education downwards raises the question of whether the new ventures are to perpetuate the traditions of American education. One such tradition, or myth, is that of the "melting pot", in which succeeding generations of immigrants have been Americanized. The public schools have been seen as a major source of fuel for the pot--teaching a common language, describing political and economic institutions as if they were monolithic, and inculcating "American" moral standards. "But what has seemed at least on the surface, to work for many second-generation Americans is clearly unsatisfactory for other minorities--Afro-, Spanish-, and Asian-Americans--and Indians."³⁹

In the 1960's, preschool programs for the disadvantaged were generally directed toward readying children for the traditional elementary school programs. Some have noted an implicit assumption in this system--that the schools are fixed and immutable; and therefore changing the child to fit the school is the solution to the problems of the "disadvantaged."⁴⁰ This attempt to change the child to fit the school rather than of changing the school to fit the children gives some weight to the arguments of those who fear public school extension into preschool programs. Michael Katz, in Class, Bureaucracy and the Schools, hypothesizes that the extension of education downward, not only in recent years but a century ago when kindergartens began to spread, is a conservative, not a radical measure.

³⁹ Millie Almy, The Early Childhood Educator at Work (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), p. 41.

⁴⁰ Charles Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom (New York: Random House, 1970), p. 81.

He writes:

Early childhood education has a long history, dating from the infant school movement in late 18th century England. At that time, philanthropists, concerned with the problem of juvenile crime, urged the establishment of schools for very young children, aged two or three. Although the infant school movement failed to spread widely in America, its emphasis on early childhood education became a permanent feature of educational thought. Later schoolmen...developed that emphasis. They, too, stressed the importance of counteracting the unfavorable influence of the home and argued that the primary purpose of early education was formation of attitudes rather than the development of skills. It was this emphasis on the relationship of early childhood education to social order that fed the kindergarten movement, in the same way, quite obviously, that widespread concern with crime and welfare expenses has given impetus to movement for preschool education today.⁴¹

So one of the more subtle but quite powerful debates underlying the question of delivery systems is that of uniformity versus cultural diversity, whether preschool programs will foster the former or the latter. In this sense, hidden behind the issues of cost and personnel and eligibility and program orientation, are basic questions of what direction we intend our society to take. Decisions on each of the issues bear implications for each of the others. None can be settled in isolation: probably all will be determined by the way they tie in with the goals we define for day care's position within society.

⁴¹Michael B. Katz, Class Bureaucracy and the Schools: The Illusion of Educational Change in America (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), pp. 121-122.

Spillovers

At least the question of spillovers can be addressed straightforwardly. They are important considerations in any public policy debate; in this case they are as diverse as they are potentially significant.

The effects of expanded day care on the labor market could be widespread and multifaceted. We have already noted the potential recycling of current teachers into day care workers. This would certainly take up the slack in a currently oversaturated market. But more generally, because day care is a highly "labor-intensive" industry, there would be a great increase in demand for child care workers under any delivery system. This might provide career options currently unavailable for men and women seeking interesting, meaningful employment that does not require years of rigorous academic preparation.

Performance-based criteria for certification as child-care workers might signal a turning point away from the credentialism that now characterizes (some would say afflicts) the American job market. If it worked in this case, it might gain legitimacy in other occupations. Although this would adversely affect some graduate training programs, it would stimulate the development of vocational, career-education programs.

There is the broader question whether women, newly free of child care responsibilities, would enter the job market in great numbers. The prospect of their swelling the labor supply in an already glutted market is hardly encouraging to even the sturdiest advocates of the women's movement. It is possible that no such surge would occur. But it is equally plausible that it might and, thereby, might aggravate social tensions between the sexes and socio-economic groups, as educated women might

initially be willing to take jobs now filled by less educated men.

The social service institutions of the country rely heavily upon volunteer labor to expand their work-force. This volunteer labor is overwhelmingly female. If this group does not now work full-time because of child-care responsibilities, and if it would take advantage of publicly financed day care to do so, then the availability of day care services might well seriously deplete the ranks of volunteer workers. If these agencies had to pay for formerly volunteer labor, their costs would rise and new higher levels of funding would have to be developed to prevent a drop in the quality of service.

Educational systems would certainly be affected if they were given responsibility for day care. If the overall share of resources that society chooses to allocate to education in general is fixed, earmarking more of it for early childhood education might in the long run affect other levels of schooling as well. One possible response would be to shift funds away from the last years of high school towards the preschool years. Many critics argue that these last years of secondary school are redundant at best for most students and positively harmful at worst. making these years optional would free funds for preschool and enable high school programs that remained to focus more on the specific interests of the students that chose to remain in school. (The assumption here is the somewhat pessimistic one that the level of funding allocated for education in general is probably fixed, and would in the long run only be shuffled around to make room for a new level of schooling.)

The very diversity of these possible spillover effects raises an important consideration. There is a great deal of risk associated with

launching a large scale social institution. This uncertainty leads to fear and skepticism among opponents as well as unsubstantiated optimism among proponents. As the uncertainty can only be eased with implementation of some variation of the proposed program, it is important to distinguish concerns that can be addressed at this point from those which cannot.

Conclusions

Whenever a serious change in socialization practices is about to be introduced into a society, a debate commences between the advocates of reform and those who fear the change because it challenges their ideology. Such a debate occurred when public schools were introduced and when women were given the vote. Recently Americans have been discussing several social changes at once: abortion on request, legislation on psychotropic drugs, community control of public health and educational resources, and, of course, day care.

The past acts as a remarkably effective moderator of both unbridled enthusiasm and gnawing apprehension, for "the history of social reforms has an unequivocal message for contemporary Americans--no reform makes a new species of man. Day care will not breed a class of anxiety-free, creative autonomous children nor will it destroy the child's trust in adults and build a valueless preadolescent. It would be equally foolish, however, to assume that this variant on child care will have no consequences for child or parent."⁴²

⁴²Jerome Kagen, Introduction to Day Care in Context by Greta G. Fein and Alison Clarke-Stewart (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1973), p. xvii.

The effect of day care upon the family and the child is ultimately the most important question that will be asked about it. Framed this way, the controversy over day care is a political question. Political in two senses--both in the sense that it will evolve through political haggling and in the grander sense that it will form a part of the process by which society shapes its values and balances its interests, decides how it shall live and what it is.⁴³

This notion of day care as a political question must prevail over the opposing view, that day care is a narrowly professional question. The determining factor in its development must not be the way the battle goes between rival groups of experts. Such an approach could too easily lead to a bracketing of all the larger political and social issues and a focusing only on the psychological or pedagogical issues within day care. Because day care raises political arguments about alternative ways of raising families, of being parents, and educating children, the arguments it raises cannot be resolved by anything but sustained public debate.

To those charged with finally making the policy decisions that would emerge from such a debate, the problem might at bottom be a structural one, intractable and uniquely characteristic of the genre of questions that must be posed.⁴⁴

This is a problem common to any fields where the data base is unreliable, especially in terms of validity. The vacuum generated by such data weaknesses is filled by ideologies. Early childhood education is an area

⁴³Steinfels, *op. cit.*

⁴⁴Lillian G. Katz, "Early Childhood Programs and Ideological Disputes," Educational Forum, March 1975, p. 266.

particularly susceptible to such data weaknesses for two reasons. First, the object of inquiry and investigation--the young child--is by definition immature. Two consequences follow. The organism is unstable. Observed changes in behavior can signal instrumental insufficiency, construct weakness, or growth, or all of the above in unspecifiable proportions. Further, the organism is powerless. And the more powerless the client or subject, the more important the researcher's ethics, intertwined with his ideology, become. Second, the definitive experiments which might settle important empirical questions cannot be performed. As long as we have any reason to suspect that something is "good" (or bad) for young children, it would be unethical to withhold (or perform) it merely for the sake of the advancement of science.

These constraints on the development of reliable data, plus pressures to protect the powerless, set an ideal stage for ideological battles. But they also set up a fascinating arena for public policy debates. For policy decisions concerning early childhood cannot--even in an ideal sense--be made on the basis of "evidence". What we are willing to accept as evidence in such a "soft" field is also a function of our ideologies.

The simple argument of this paper is that we must take this into account when we design a national system of day care. When we survey the diversity of goals and the variety of interests at work in this debate, we can at least make the case that no one system should be instituted at this point. Since we in the United States accept and value ethnic pluralism, it is not reasonable to assume that one kind of program is best for all children. Since parents must have a stake in the values and skills taught to their

children, they should be involved in the implementation and strategies of care in child care centers. Since there are no perfect traits for a child to possess, the task of deciding what his ideal psychological goals will be is an ethical rather than a scientific issue.⁴⁵

There is a need for diverse approaches to early education, each having a unique role to play in relation to the varied needs of young children. Therefore, a panoply of early childhood education programs should be supported, with none compulsory and all backed by adequate personnel--preparation programs and appropriate regulatory procedures to protect both children and parents.

Thus, within the framework this paper has constructed, it is clear that the argument for public school prime sponsorship of day care programs in this country is far from compelling. Indeed, the dangers of such a system seem to outweigh the benefits that can be enumerated.

There is one larger moral to be drawn. That is the warning that even apparently straightforward issues often reflect rather fundamental questions of import to members of society beyond those groups immediately affected. It is important to search out those larger questions and speak to them, for that is the only way that the issues will be clearly focused or honestly resolved.

⁴⁵John I. Goodlad and others, *Early Schooling in the United States* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1973), p. 129.

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